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United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Human resources management

Letter dated 18 May 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to write to you on behalf of 21 members of the Group of Eastern European States eligible for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. I should like to follow up on the letter that was sent to you on 10 March 2006 by the Slovak Chairmanship of our Group in the month of March regarding the unacceptable underrepresentation of nationals from our countries at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General level in the United Nations Secretariat.

These members of the Group of Eastern European States have then expressed their view that 2.65 per cent representation at the senior level of the United Nations Secretariat ranges dramatically below any reasonable balancing among the five regional groups established at the United Nations, significantly lower than any legitimate expectation of 21 Member States, and certainly does not reflect the requirements laid down in Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, the Group has zero representation at the senior level at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

We note with regret that recent appointments in the upper echelons of the Secretariat at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General level do not reveal any intention of improving this situation. We believe that the best way to implement the long-overdue management reform in the Secretariat is not to reshuffle its staff, but to bring in new highly skilled professionals, capable of introducing real change.

Moreover, a series of omissions vis-à-vis our Group in the setting up of the different high-level advisory mechanisms, like, most recently, the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence, the Central Emergency Response Fund Advisory Group, and the Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention consolidate our

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perception that the region of Eastern Europe is unjustly marginalized from the life of the Organization. Our leaders have taken an integral part in the decision-making on these undertakings, and our Governments contribute to some of them.

With specific regard to the letter of the Group of Eastern European States of 10 March 2006 (see annex), we are compelled to point out that it has remained unanswered for over two months now, which gives us serious cause for concern.

I should like to ask you to kindly ensure that the questions raised on behalf of 21 States Members of the United Nations are given proper consideration, and that this and the letter of the Group of Eastern European States dated 10 March 2006 are distributed as documents of the General Assembly under agenda items 118, 122 and 129.

(*Signed*) Valeriy **Kuchinsky**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 18 May 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

10 March 2006

I have the honour to write to you on behalf of members of the Group of Eastern European States at the United Nations eligible for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, in the context of ongoing efforts to reform the management of the Organization.

Against this background, I would like to take the opportunity to submit once more to your kind consideration the views shared by above-mentioned countries of the Group of Eastern European States with regard to the less than modest presence of their nationals within the top ranks of the United Nations Secretariat.

According to the "Count of Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General in the Secretariat", the situation as at 30 September 2005 was as follows: only 2 Under-Secretaries-General (out of a total of 59, amounting to 3.38 per cent), and 1 Assistant Secretary-General (out of a total of 54, amounting to 1.85 per cent) come from Eastern European countries. Therefore, the overall situation amounted last September to a total count of 3 Eastern Europeans out of 113 United Nations dignitaries, which translates to 2.65 per cent. To the best of my knowledge, this state of affairs has not improved, or changed, in the meantime.

You would certainly concur with our concern in the face of the fairly poor rate at which nationals from Eastern European countries are present in the senior management of the world Organization, since the Group of Eastern European States is one of the five regional groups recognized within the United Nations membership, making up 11.54 per cent of the 191 United Nations; that, of course, if we are to base ourselves only on this easily available, though not exhaustive criterion.

One of the most relevant ways in which nations take part in the life of the Organization is certainly the participation of their brightest and most qualified nationals in the work of its Secretariat. Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations states in its third paragraph that "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible." While the current situation does not seem to adequately respond to this latter requirement of the Charter, we firmly believe that there is no shortage of such suitable personalities on our countries, also when it comes to fulfilling Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General-level positions.

I trust that you will kindly consider the present démarche and that it will be possible to work together proactively with a view to addressing satisfactorily and promptly the issue of representation of duly qualified Eastern Europeans in the upper echelons of our Organization.

(*Signed*) Peter **Burian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative